



ARCHBISHOP KAIGAMA DESCRIBES HOSPITALITY AS HUMANITY'S ONENESS IN THE LIKENESS AND IMAGE OF GOD

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ABUJA, NIGERIA -

The Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Most Rev. Ignatius Ayau Kaigama has described hospitality as a clear indication of man's oneness in the likeness and image of God, irrespective of ethnic, religious, colour or status differences. The Archbishop made this remark in his homily at the celebration of the Mass at St. Luke's Parish Church, Kubwa, Abuja, on the 13th Sunday of the Church's Year calendar. He declared: "I have however chosen to reflect on the theme of hospitality, believing that even if we have a big cross to carry and we are there for one another, hospitable to one another, we shall carry the cross successfully and fruitfully.

Using the readings of the day to outline the benefits of hospitality, Archbishop Kaigama stated that it is an act of doing well as a creature of God without expecting any reciprocal favour. He noted: "If we have the spirit to graciously welcome and support one another

and equitably distribute our God-given resources, our burdens as Nigerians will become much lighter and the violence we witness which is really a protest of the materially deprived manifesting in different forms will be greatly minimized.” He added: “Hospitality means that you welcome others with love and dignity, because they are made in the image and likeness of God.”

The local ordinary of Abuja Archdiocese expressed concern that the “indigene” syndrome, is affecting the Nigerian nation and preventing progress and development; calling for a re-examination of consciences and change of hearts in this perspective. His words: A Nigerian should be able to live and work in a hospitable and safe environment in the North or South or East or West of Nigeria without suffering discrimination. Unfortunately, because of the “indigene” syndrome, neighbours sometimes fight dirty. Nigerians identify their States in terms of tribe, and we know that tribes in Nigeria see other tribes as opposition or competitors and so, parochial ethnic interests always prevail rather than the common good.”

He continued: “The twin problems of ethnic chauvinism and religious myopia added to poverty because of economic injustice are responsible for the conflicts, killings, destruction of farms, animals and even physical infrastructure. Surprisingly, even very educated, enlightened and well exposed Nigerians fail the test when it comes to issues

of religion and tribe. The philosophy is: “We first and others after”. Sadly, this is a tragic recipe for disaster and continuous acrimony.

Archbishop Kaigama regretted that Nigerians, including religious leaders, easily become sentimental and almost confrontational or stand truth on the head when issues that affect their ethnic groups are up for discussion. Using the crisis between the Jukun and Tiv of Taraba State, the Archbishop regretted that the two tribes have been at each other’s neck for decades, killing innocent citizens without any justification. Calling for an end to the “mutual brutality”; the Archbishop assured that this will bring economic prosperity and healthy interpersonal relationship between the two tribes.

He also outlined the roles government and other stakeholder groups can play to facilitate peace and harmony among the two tribes, by siting agricultural projects in the two areas and equipping their youths with modern farming tool that will keep them busy and facilitate economic growth, social integration and peaceful co-existence in the area.

Noting that the country has enough challenges from COVID-19, religious fanatics, militant herdsmen, bandits, among others; Archbishop Kaigama declared: “We should learn to cultivate the kind of peaceful environment that prophet Isaiah describes in 11:6; such a hospitable climate that “The wolf will dwell with the lamb; and the leopard will lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion and the sheep will abide together; and a little boy

will drive them.”